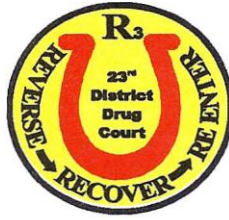


**State of Tennessee
23rd Judicial District
Drug Court Program**



Press Release

**Contact: Kevin Batts
Drug Court Coordinator
(615) 306-6229**

Local Drug Court Earns State Certification

The 23rd Judicial District Drug Court has been granted State Certification from the Tennessee Office of Criminal Justice Programs. The Drug Court serves the citizens of Cheatham, Dickson, Houston, Humphreys, and Stewart Counties.

The Office of Criminal Justice Programs has developed standards for drug court programs in Tennessee, which include ten Key Components and benchmarks for effective drug court programs.

“Our Drug Court promotes responsibility and accountability and teaches participants to become productive citizens in the community,” according to District Attorney General Dan Alsobrooks. He adds, “The drug court program is an alternative to incarceration and integrates chemical dependency treatment and community resources with the criminal justice system.”

Judge Robert E. Burch presides over Drug Court each Thursday night to review participants’ progress. Judge Burch sternly advises new participants, “We’re going to run your life for the next two years ... because, quite frankly, you’ve not been doing a very good job of it.” And with that admonition, new participants embark on a journey that will change their lives. Drug Court participants are involved in counseling sessions to help them recover from their drug and alcohol dependency. The goal is to give these non-violent offenders a new lease on life, with the skills to be productive, law-abiding citizens.



Circuit Judge Robert Burch (center) is presented the Drug Court’s Certification at a recent meeting of the Tennessee Association of Drug Court Professionals in Murfreesboro. Also pictured are (l-r) Kevin Batts, Drug Court Coordinator; Carolyn Hardin, National Drug Court Institute; Judge Burch; Doug Beecham, DUI Coordinator; and Bill Scollon, Office of Criminal Justice Programs.

The 23rd Judicial District Drug Court is a collaborative link between the courts, prosecutors, public defenders, law enforcement, probation officers, treatment providers, social service agencies, and community-based non-profit organizations.

A standardized assessment process is utilized to identify eligible non-violent offenders. The Drug Court Team includes individuals trained in drug abuse and recovery issues who operate in a non-adversarial environment. The Drug Court utilizes a system of graduated sanctions and incentives to encourage recovery goals and holds participants accountable for non-compliant behaviors.

“Drug Court has proven to be an effective alternative to expensive incarceration,” according to Public Defender Jake Lockert. “Drug Court reduces crime and drug abuse by providing treatment to drug-addicted offenders. The program requires strict accountability from participants through frequent in-person court hearings and intensive monitoring. Drug Court requires total abstinence from illicit and illegal drugs and alcohol,” Lockert adds.

National studies point out additional benefits of the Drug Court Program:

- Reduces emergency room, hospital, and medical costs.
- Reduces domestic violence.
- Reduces felony and misdemeanor crimes.
- Promotes completion of education and/or vocational training.
- Requires employment in tax-paying jobs.
- Decreases use of public assistance.
- Eases court, jail, and prison overcrowding and costs.
- Stops criminal and other self-defeating behaviors.
- Breaks the cycle of addiction.
- Requires accountability and responsibility for choices and actions.
- Improves family and other relationships.

District Attorney Alsobrooks points out additional benefits of the 23rd District Drug Court. “Drug Courts are the most effective justice intervention for treating drug-addicted people. Drug Courts reduce drug use. Drug Courts reduce crime. Drug Courts save money. Drug Courts restore lives. Drug Courts save children and reunite families,” Alsobrooks adds.

According to Judge Burch, “The 23rd Judicial District Drug Court Program was established ten years ago to help addicted criminal offenders become productive citizens in our community. Those accepted into the Drug Court Program are sent to in-patient treatment programs for at least 28 days. Once treatment is completed, Participants live in one of the Program’s Sober Living Houses.” Judge Burch further notes, “Participants are required to obtain employment and are under the supervision of a probation officer and house manager. Participants are required to attend daily support group meetings and attend Court once a week. Each Participant’s progress is monitored closely by Team Members and each participant receives individualized counseling along the way.”

The Program is not easy. Public Defender Lockert cautions “Successful participants must dedicate themselves to significant change. But in the end, it’s worth it.” National statistics indicate that 75% of Drug Court graduates remain arrest-free at least two years after graduation. Drug Court Programs save taxpayers between \$4,000 and \$12,000 per participant by reducing the cost of trials and incarceration.

Quite simply, Drug Court Works!

(Photo and electronic copy available by e-mail. Send request to kb0713@comcast.net)